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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's the most wonderful time of the year!

It's December and this year passed by in a blink, didn't it?

There's always something about December that everyone looks forward to. Perhaps it's the year end where you'll be clearing your annual leaves, the festive season or you might also be looking forward to letting go of 2023 and all ready to move into 2024.

No matter what the reason is, December is truly one of the most wonderful times of the year and we at 1Twenty80 look forward to this time of the year too. With the festive cheer and feasting, there's also the opportunity to celebrate as well as to ponder upon the past few months and to unwind.

There's so much the last four weeks of the year has to hold but I believe we can all agree that it's truly one of the most precious weeks.

As you treasure the last month of the year and create beautiful memories to make the best out of 2023, let's also celebrate this month without disregarding our health. Though, we understand… It can get a little challenging to adhere to a strict diet or routine and that's alright! It's okay to let loose a little sometimes and enjoy the moment and as you do so, we've got some tips to share with you on how you can make the best out of December.

Enjoy the last month of 2023 and may you have an amazing start to 2024. To those who are celebrating, a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Edeline

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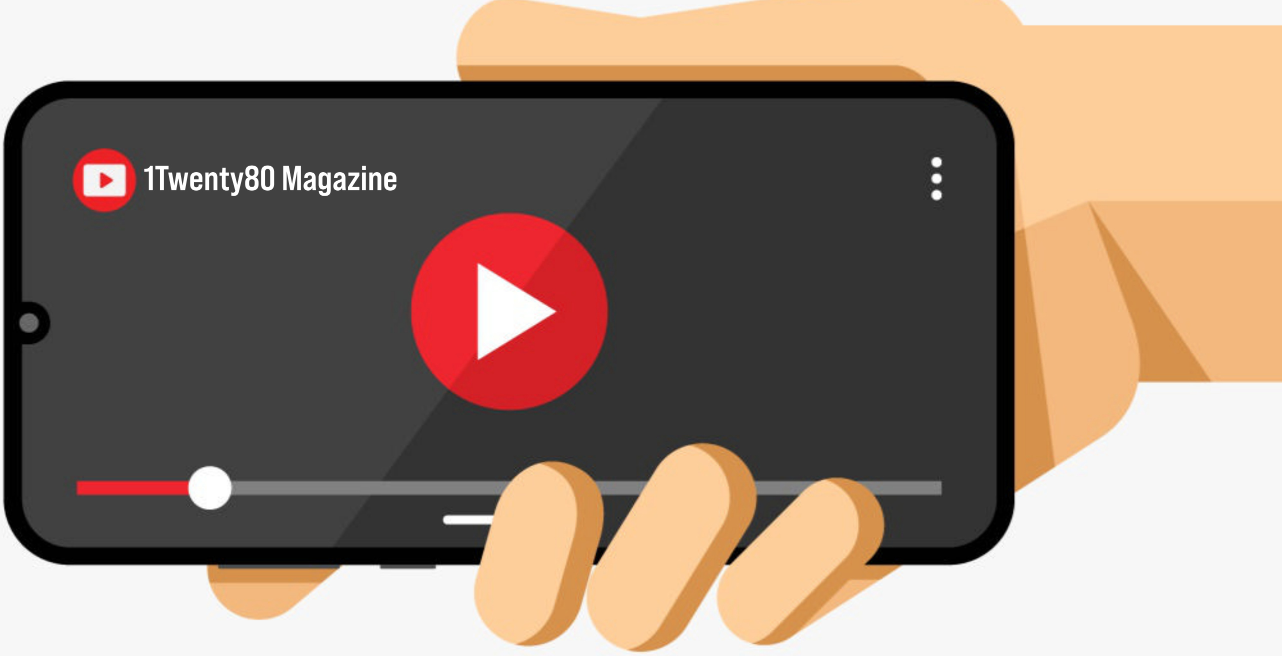
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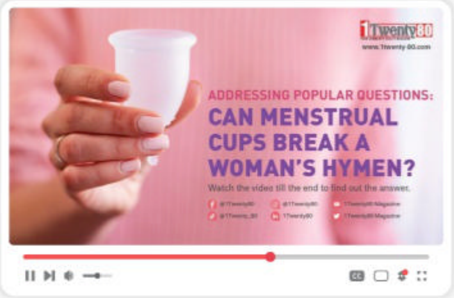
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OVERCOMING ANXIETY AT WORK

Be the best version of yourself at work

By Ada Hoh

Do you find yourself dreading Monday mornings to the point where it affects other areas in your life, such as your mood, attitude, and ability to do things? Do you feel nervous thinking about your job, or anything related to it?

If yes, you may be experiencing workplace anxiety.

SYMPTOMS OF WORKPLACE ANXIETY

Workplace anxiety may involve a number of signs:

- Feeling physically ill about work-related tasks, such as headaches, neck pains, stomach pains, or high blood pressure.
- Having a hard time focusing on work, often procrastinating or making careless mistakes.
- Avoiding meetings, new projects, or work events.
- Feeling completely depleted and exhausted after work.
- Constantly thinking or worrying about work even during off-hours.
- Feeling more irritable, snapping at others, or having mood swings.

CAUSES OF WORKPLACE ANXIETY

Workplace anxiety may be caused by a number of factors:

- Unmanageable workloads and deadlines.
- Unrealistic demands from superiors or bosses.
- Hostility among colleagues, harassment, or unfair treatment.
- Overly competitive work culture.
- Lack of work-life balance.
- Imposter syndrome, or a tendency to doubt yourself in your work.
- Lack of purpose in your work.
- Existing feelings of anxiety.

WAYS TO DEAL WITH WORKPLACE ANXIETY

If workplace anxiety is left unaddressed, it may lead to serious consequences, including burnout, insomnia, depression, chronic illnesses, and even early mortality.

As such, it is important to address the issues immediately. Here are some ways to deal with workplace anxiety:

- Reflect and analyse the main issues contributing to your anxiety.
- Talk to your employer about the issues affecting your mental health and productivity.
- Talk to a co-worker you can trust to share your experiences.
- Try to maintain positive work relationships or resolve any past conflicts.
- Create your own mission statement to understand your purpose doing the job.
- Be gentle with yourself, acknowledge your feelings and challenge negative beliefs about yourself.
- Engage in fun and relaxing activities after your work, such as exercising, meeting with friends or family, journaling, or connecting to nature.

Workplace anxiety is common, but shouldn't be left unattended. Taking small steps can make a big difference. Above all, remember that you deserve to work in a safe and reasonable environment.

Sources: Healthline, Choosing Therapy, Out of Stress

FEAST, FROLIC, AND STAY FIT

Enjoy the holidays without the guilt

By Yasanthi Devi

The festive season is a time of joy, celebration, and, of course, delicious feasts. However, it can also be a challenging period for those who have worked hard to maintain a slim figure throughout the year. The temptation to indulge in calorie-laden treats and rich meals is ever-present, but fear not!

We'll explore some practical tips to help you navigate the holiday season while keeping your fit figure intact. These tips go beyond just exercising and focus on mindful choices to enjoy the festivities without overindulging.

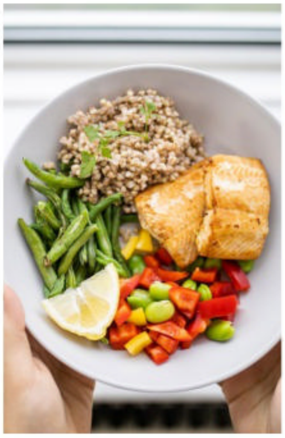
IMPORTANT TIPS

ENGAGE IN CREATIVE ACTIVITIES TO STAY ACTIVE

While some seasons may present challenges for outdoor activities, creativity can help you remain active. Organize a family stroll or hike, engage in outdoor games like tag or frisbee, or take advantage of indoor facilities such as ice skating rinks or swimming pools. Staying physically active not only burns calories but also enhances your mood and energy levels. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) underscores the significance of regular physical activity for overall health and effective weight management.

EMBRACE MINDFUL EATING AND ADEQUATE HYDRATION

Incorporate mindful eating habits by relishing each bite, chewing slowly, and savoring the flavors. This approach aids in recognizing satiety cues, preventing mindless overeating. Furthermore, maintain hydration by consuming water or herbal tea, which can help suppress false hunger signals that often lead to excessive snacking.



PRIORITIZE PORTION MANAGEMENT

Festive feasts are often synonymous with generous servings, but this doesn't mean you must clear your plate each time. Utilizing smaller plates and utensils can be instrumental in governing portion sizes. Commence your meal with a smaller portion of your favorite dishes, relish each morsel, and keep a look out for your body's signals of hunger. This approach enables you to enjoy a taste of everything without succumbing to overindulgence. According to recommendations from the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, portion control is a recognized and effective strategy for managing weight.

BEWARE OF CONCEALED SUGARS

One of the major culprits contributing to holiday weight gain is the presence of hidden sugars. These sugars hide in dishes that appear innocent, such as cranberry sauce, sweetened beverages, and even savoury snacks. To stay on a healthy track, it's essential to cultivate the habit of observing food labels and selecting products with reduced added sugars. Opt for naturally sweet fruits as a dessert alternative, and restrict your intake of sugary cocktails and soft drinks. According to findings from the American Heart Association, excessive sugar consumption can result in weight gain and various health-related problems.

PLAN AHEAD AND OPT FOR HEALTHIER SUBSTITUTES

Before heading to a festive gathering, consider consuming a small, well-balanced meal or snack at home. This practice can help curb your appetite and deter overindulgence later on. Additionally, contemplate substituting healthier ingredients in traditional recipes. For instance, you can replace sour cream with Greek yogurt, opt for whole wheat flour instead of white flour, and use olive oil as a healthier alternative to butter.

A FOODIE'S GUIDE TO ENJOY FESTIVITIES WITHOUT OVERINDULGING

MIND FUL
INTU ITIVE
EATING

CONSIDER INTUITIVE EATING

Intuitive eating is a method that educates individuals on making wholesome decisions and fosters a constructive connection with food. Intuitive eating helps an individual be mindful of signals of hunger and fullness, which can reduce the likelihood of overindulging and assist in breaking unhealthy patterns such as overeating.

TUNE INTO YOUR BODY

Pay heed to your body's signals of hunger and fullness. A good cue to put your fork and spoon down is when you feel satisfied, even if there's food remaining on your plate.

SOCIALIZE AWAY FROM THE BUFFET

Engage in conversations and activities that divert your attention from the food table. This strategy reduces impulsive snacking and allows you to concentrate on socializing.

RESIST FOOD PUSHERS

Politely decline offers of additional servings or excessive treats from well-intentioned hosts. Do remember that you are in charge of what you consume.

INCORPORATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Integrate physical activity into your festive routine. Suggest a post-meal walk with family or friends, or organize active games and pastimes to offset indulgent eating.

CHAMPION MODERATION, NOT DEPRIVATION

Remind yourself that relishing special foods during festivities is an integral part of the experience. Strive for moderation instead of rigid restriction, as it fosters a more gratifying and sustainable approach to healthy eating.

By implementing these tips, you can relish the festive season's culinary delights without the guilt of overindulging. Celebrate the joy of the occasion while making mindful choices that support your overall well-being. Remember, it's not about deprivation but about making informed choices that allow you to indulge in moderation.

So celebrate, feast, and enjoy the festivities while keeping your health and figure in check! ■

Sources: American Heart Association, National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Harvard Health Publishing, Mayo Clinic, Healthline

JET LAG SURVIVAL GUIDE

Tips for adults and kids

By Yasanthi Devi

Jet lag is a common issue faced by travelers of all age groups when crossing multiple time zones. It can disrupt sleep patterns, lead to fatigue, and negatively impact overall well-being. Whether you're an adult going on a business trip or a family on vacation, jet lag can put a damper on your plans. Nevertheless, there are strategies and lifestyle adjustments that can help both children and adults effectively handle jet lag.

UNDERSTANDING JET LAG

Jet lag occurs when rapid changes in time zones disrupt your body's internal clock, also known as the circadian rhythm. The more time zones you cross, the more challenging it becomes for your body to adapt. This disruption can result in a range of symptoms, including:

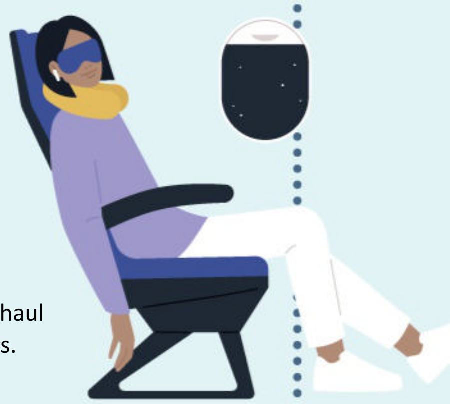
- Disturbances in sleep.
- Fatigue and grogginess.
- Irritability.
- Digestive issues.

MANAGING JET LAG FOR ADULTS

Adults often have more control over their routines and can take proactive measures to mitigate the effects of jet lag.

#1 PLAN AHEAD

Alter your sleep routine a few days prior to your journey so that it aligns with the time zone of your destination. Slowly change both your bedtime and the time you wake up.



#2 STAY HYDRATED

Dehydration can exacerbate jet lag symptoms. Keep yourself well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during, and after your flight, and limit alcohol and caffeine consumption.

#3 SLEEP ON THE PLANE

Create a comfortable sleeping environment on long-haul flights by using eye masks, earplugs, and neck pillows.

#4 WATCH YOUR DIET

Opt for light, balanced meals before and during your flight, avoiding heavy or rich foods that may disrupt digestion.

#5 EXPOSURE TO NATURAL LIGHT

Spend time outdoors during daylight hours upon arrival to signal to your body that it's time to be awake.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) FOR ADULTS DEALING WITH JET LAG

To provide better insight into managing jet lag, here are some commonly asked questions for adults:

Question 1:

WHAT ARE TYPICAL JET LAG SYMPTOMS?

Common symptoms include difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, daytime fatigue, irritability, decreased concentration, and digestive issues such as diarrhea or constipation.

Question 2:

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO FULLY RECOVER FROM JET LAG?

Recovery time varies among individuals and depends on factors like the number of time zones crossed, personal sleep patterns, and age. Typically, it takes about one day to adjust to each time zone crossed. Therefore, if you've crossed five time zones, it might take approximately five days to fully recover.

Question 3:

ARE THERE PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE JET LAG'S IMPACT?

Yes, several strategies can minimize jet lag effects, including gradually adjusting your sleep schedule to match the destination's time zone, staying hydrated, avoiding excessive alcohol and caffeine consumption, and exposing yourself to natural light at your destination.

Question 4:

SHOULD I USE SLEEP MEDICATION OR MELATONIN SUPPLEMENTS FOR JET LAG?

While some travelers use these, it's advisable to consult a healthcare professional first. Melatonin supplements may be helpful for some individuals but may vary in effectiveness and have potential side effects and interactions with other medications.

Question 5:

HOW CAN I RESET MY SLEEP SCHEDULE AT MY DESTINATION?

To adjust your sleep schedule, ensure exposure to natural daylight throughout the day, avoid lengthy daytime naps, and gradually shift your bedtime and wake-up time to align with the local time.

Question 6:

CAN CERTAIN MEDICAL CONDITIONS WORSEN JET LAG'S EFFECTS?

Medical conditions like sleep disorders, cardiovascular issues, and diabetes may make individuals more susceptible to jet lag's effects. It's crucial to consult a healthcare professional before traveling if you have underlying health concerns.

Question 7:

HOW CAN I MINIMISE JET LAG'S DISRUPTION ON BUSINESS TRIPS?

For business travelers, planning is key. Try to schedule meetings and activities according to your internal body clock, and prioritize rest and sleep to stay alert during important engagements.

Question 8:

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE FOR JET LAG?

If your jet lag symptoms persist or become severe, it's advisable to consult a healthcare professional for a tailored assessment and recommendations.

Remember that managing jet lag is a personal process, and what works for one person may not work for another. Experiment with various strategies to find what helps you adjust more comfortably to new time zones during your travels.

MANAGING JET LAG FOR KIDS

Dealing with jet lag in children can be more challenging, but their well-being should be a priority. Here are effective strategies for helping your children navigate jet lag:

#1

STICK TO A ROUTINE

Try to maintain your child's usual sleep and meal schedules as closely as possible during your trip to minimize disruptions to their internal body clock.

#2

ENCOURAGE NAPS

Younger children may benefit from short naps during the flight to keep them well-rested. Bring their favorite comfort items for familiarity.

#3

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

After arrival, encourage physical activity for your children. A walk or a visit to a playground can help them expend energy and adapt to the new time zone more quickly.

#4 LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Excessive screen time before bedtime can interfere with a child's ability to fall asleep. Establish a screen-free bedtime routine that may include reading a book or engaging in calming activities.

#5 BE PATIENT

Children may experience mood swings or behavioral changes as they adjust to a new time zone. Be patient and understanding, giving them time to adapt.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) ABOUT JET LAG FOR KIDS

Jet lag can affect children differently than adults when traveling across multiple time zones. Here are some commonly asked questions to help parents understand and manage this issue:

Question 1:

WHY DOES JET LAG AFFECT KIDS DIFFERENTLY THAN ADULTS?

Children's bodies and sleep patterns are still developing, making them more sensitive to changes in their routines. Jet lag can impact kids more because they may struggle with adjusting to a new schedule.

Question 2:

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR KIDS TO OVERCOME JET LAG?

The time it takes for kids to recover from jet lag varies, but typically, it takes about one day for each time zone crossed. So, if you crossed three time zones, it might take around three days for both your child's and your own bodies to fully adapt.

Question 3:

ARE THERE FUN ACTIVITIES TO HELP KIDS COPE WITH JET LAG?

Exploring new surroundings, visiting parks, and engaging in outdoor activities during the day can be enjoyable and helpful in resetting your child's internal body clock. Reading books or playing calming games before bedtime can be soothing.

Question 4:

CAN WE PREVENT JET LAG FOR OUR KIDS?

Although it's challenging to prevent jet lag entirely, you can reduce its impact by gradually adjusting your child's sleep schedule to match the destination's time zone a few days before your trip, encouraging them to stay hydrated, and exposing them to natural light during the day at your destination.

Question 5:

WHEN SHOULD WE SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE IF OUR CHILD IS STRUGGLING WITH JET LAG?

If your child continues to struggle with sleep or adapting to the new time zone, it's a good idea to consult a pediatrician. They can provide guidance on managing jet lag and ensure there are no underlying health concerns. ■

Source: Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, Sleep Foundation, Healthline

The Superfoods Guide
TO A HEALTHIER YOU

Unlocking the nutritional wonders

By Dr. Anish Desai

In the 1990s, 'superfood' emerged to describe a particular category of foods renowned for their exceptional nutritional properties. While various definitions exist, superfoods are typically recognized for their high content of essential macro- and micronutrients, contributing to improved human health and preventing illness. These nutrient-packed powerhouses are brimming with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other health-enhancing compounds, significantly boosting overall well-being. Superfoods have gained popularity for their potential to positively impact health, making them a valuable addition to one's diet and a subject of ongoing research and fascination.

Superfoods have several health advantages, yet they can differ from one food to another. However, a few typical benefits of including superfoods in your diet are:

NUTRIENT DENSITY

Superfoods are a concentrated source of vitamins, minerals, and other necessary components that the body needs for proper operation. This is known as their nutrient density.

> SUPERFOODS HAVE SEVERAL HEALTH ADVANTAGES, YET THEY CAN DIFFER FROM ONE FOOD TO ANOTHER

POWER OF ANTIOXIDANTS

Packed with protective properties against free radicals and oxidative stress, antioxidants can potentially minimize the risk of chronic diseases. This is especially true for several superfoods.

ANTIOXIDANT

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY PROPERTIES

Anti-inflammatory substances found in several superfoods can help manage inflammation, a common cause of several illnesses.

HEART HEALTH

Superfoods that lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and the risk of heart disease, such as fatty fish, berries, and nuts, are proven to enhance heart health.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

By increasing satiety, controlling blood sugar, and speeding up metabolism, several superfoods help with weight management.

COGNITIVE FUNCTION

Some superfoods may lower the risk of neurodegenerative illnesses by promoting brain health and mental performance.

DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Superfoods high in probiotics and fiber can help maintain a healthy digestive tract, which can help with digestion and guard against gastrointestinal problems.

IMMUNE SYSTEM SUPPORT

The body may ward off infections and illnesses by strengthening its immune system with the vitamins and minerals present in superfoods.

SKIN HEALTH

Antioxidants and essential fatty acids found in superfoods help improve skin health and fight the effects of ageing.

CANCER PREVENTION

Anti-cancer qualities in certain superfoods may protect against malignant cell growth.

ANTI
CANCER

Now, let's explore some of the most well-known superfoods and their health benefits.

#1 AMLA

Also known as Indian gooseberry, is often considered a superfood due to its impressive nutritional profile and numerous potential health benefits. It has an essential role in the traditional medicine of India to reduce anxiety and burning sensation in the skin and eyes, improve the anaemic condition, favour the health of the male reproductive system and reproduction, facilitate digestion, improve liver health, and also exert a tonic effect in the cardiovascular system.

#2 MILLETS

In contrast to rice and wheat, millets are not only a good source of energy and major nutrients, including protein but are also a good source of micronutrients such as vitamins, including vitamins A, B, D, E, niacin, pyridoxine, antioxidants, iron and zinc. Millets contain many protective polyphenols such as hydroxycinnamic acid, catechin, quercetin, luteolin, orientin, apigenin and isoorientin. These polyphenols have antioxidant activity with free radical scavenging action and anti-inflammatory activity. Millets have anti-diabetic, anti-obesity and anti-hypertensive properties.

#3 KALE

Commonly known as Karam Saag, contains various micronutrients, including vitamins and minerals, antioxidants, carotenoids, glucosinolates, and polyphenols, which benefit human health. Kale is also a good source of prebiotic carbohydrates and phytochemicals, such as folic acid, riboflavin, carotenes, and others that serve as antioxidants, capturing free radicals and aiding in reducing inflammation. Owing to these properties, kale has become widely known as a medicinal food source to treat bowel ailments, obesity, malnutrition problems, and chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.

#4 BERRIES

Berries are often classified as superfoods due to their nutritional content and potential health benefits. Berries, including blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries, are packed with antioxidants such as anthocyanins, quercetin, and vitamin C. These antioxidants help protect the body from oxidative stress linked to chronic diseases and ageing.

#5

QUINOA

Quinoa is a gluten-free ancient grain packed with nutrients. It's a complete protein source, rich in fibre, vitamins, and minerals. Quinoa offers numerous health benefits, including improved heart health, weight management, and essential minerals like iron and magnesium. Its versatility and mild nutty flavour make it a popular addition to various dishes.

#6 NUTS AND SEEDS

Nuts and seeds like almonds, walnuts, and flaxseeds, are nutritional powerhouses. Rich in vital minerals and good fats, they have several health advantages. These superfoods improve heart health, aid in blood sugar regulation, and assist in managing weight. Their high fibre level also helps with satiety, which makes them a filling and healthy snack or side dish.

#7

AVOCADO

Avocado is celebrated for its exceptional nutritional value. Rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats, avocados provide ample potassium, fibre, and essential vitamins. This creamy fruit can promote satiety, support weight management, and contribute to overall health. Its versatility in culinary applications makes it an easy and delicious addition to a balanced diet.

WAYS TO INCORPORATE SUPERFOODS INTO YOUR DIET

▶▶ SMOOTHIES

Berries, leafy greens, and chia seeds

▶▶ SALADS

Leafy greens, avocados, nuts, and seeds, with olive oil and turmeric

▶▶ GRAIN BOWLS

Quinoa, roasted vegetables, beans, with garlic and olive oil

While superfoods aren't a cure-all for health issues, including them in your diet is an excellent choice. These foods have remarkable nutritional profiles and health-promoting qualities, making them important components in your quest for improved health. You're moving in the right direction toward a better, happier version of yourself by realizing the power of superfoods. Remember that your diet should also focus on the foods you include in addition to the things you avoid. These nutrient-dense powerhouses can help you enjoy the pleasures of well-being, strengthen your body, and lower your chance of developing chronic illnesses. So, make them a delicious and wholesome part of your everyday meals. ■

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Are you a highly sensitive person?

Where vulnerability meets resilience

By Isabel Andrew

We tend to describe someone who cries easily or feels emotions more profoundly than others as crybabies or sensitive. While it often comes with a negative connotation, being sensitive or even highly sensitive has its perks.

We got curious as to how a highly sensitive person can navigate the challenges of a harsh world, and we know you are too. So here's an enlightening interview we had with Grace Hu, Clinical Psychologist with Relate Malaysia who spoke about the powerful mix of vulnerability and resilience.

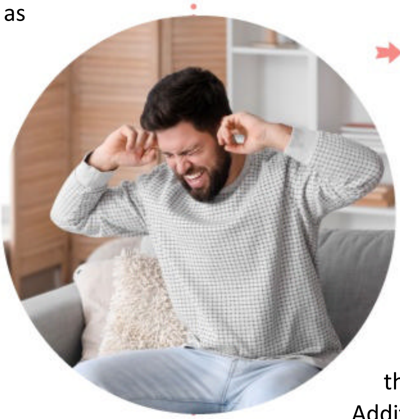
1Twenty80:

How is the term 'highly sensitive people' (HSPs) defined in the context of psychology?

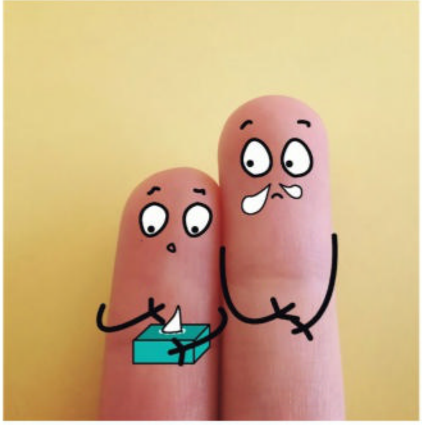
Grace Hu:

Highly Sensitive People (HSPs) is conceptualised by Elaine N. Aron, who is an American clinical research psychologist. It was only recently, in the 1990s, that we were introduced to HSP.
In a nutshell, HSPs are people who are extremely sensitive to outside stimuli.

Emotional inputs such as deep sadness and rage, as well as sensory inputs like bright lights, loud noises, and strong smells, can all be considered stimuli.
HSP is not a mental health diagnosis or disorder. It's more of a personality trait, in my opinion, with its advantages and disadvantages.



> EMOTIONAL INPUTS SUCH AS DEEP SADNESS AND RAGE, AS WELL AS SENSORY INPUTS LIKE BRIGHT LIGHTS, LOUD NOISES, AND STRONG SMELLS, CAN ALL BE CONSIDERED STIMULI.



1Twenty80:

What are the characteristics of HSP?

Grace:

Some of the characteristics of HSPs include:

A HEIGHTENED SENSORY SENSITIVITY

They are extremely sensitive to bright lights, loud sounds, or strong smells. They also have a propensity to get easily overwhelmed in those kinds of situations. Additionally, crowds may cause overstimulation.

A HIGH DEGREE OF EMPATHY

HSPs also have a high degree of empathy. They can therefore quickly pick up on the subtleties and changes in one's facial expressions and emotional states. They can form deep emotional connections with others.

A HSP may experience a scene in a movie more intensely than others if it has especially moving scenes. They might also have strong empathy and compassion if they witness instances of bullying reported in the news. So it's no surprise that some social rights advocates could be HSPs.

THE ABILITY TO PROCESS INFORMATION THOUGHTFULLY

HSPs tend to thoughtfully process information. They would reflect on their experiences and their thoughts, but it makes them very thoughtful.

THE ABILITY TO BE VERY CONSCIENTIOUS

HSPs also tend to be very conscientious. They typically take great responsibility for their job and are meticulous.

1Twenty80:

What causes high sensitivity?

Grace:

As of yet, the precise cause of high sensitivity in HSPs remains unknown. But I would say it's likely to be a complex interplay of everything. Environmental factors, neurological conditions, and genetics could all play a role.

One way to look at it is that you might already have some genetic predispositions that make you more sensitive. You might then experience a mental health issue. You can eventually feel overwhelmed by life's stresses.

Sometimes, when people deal with early trauma or significant life events that leave an impact on their lives, they may develop heightened sensitivity. Again, it must be stressed that HSP is not a diagnosis but rather a personality trait that has its pros and cons.

HIGHLY
SENSITIVE
PERSON

1Twenty80:

How do you assess whether an individual is highly sensitive?

Grace:

There is a HSP quiz developed by psychologist Elaine Aron that can be used as a self-assessment tool. However, it's not a diagnostic tool.

It's a means of improving your self-awareness. So if you feel like you just want to understand why you feel so deeply, this can be one way.

However, in the event that you have persistent anxiety, low appetite and or insomnia. Then, as these are indicators of a mental health issue, you ought to get assistance as soon as you can. It doesn't hurt to have a qualified professional confirm it if you're not sure either.

1Twenty80:

What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of HSPs?

Grace:

Every HSP is different. They all have their own unique set of strengths and weaknesses. Generally speaking, their greatest strength is their extreme compassion and empathy. Being deeply sensitive to others' feelings is a very significant gift since it allows you to provide them with much-needed consolation and support. HSPs frequently have a high degree of insight since they are able to analyse information thoroughly.

Regarding vulnerabilities, having such heightened sensitivity can potentially result in overstimulation. HSPs may find it difficult to adjust to new environments or intense stimuli. They are more likely than other people to get extremely tense or nervous. Additionally, they might be more easily offended by criticism, which could cause them to worry excessively and strive for perfection.

1Twenty80:

How can HSPs cope with these challenges?

Grace:

I would say the first step is really to recognise, accept, and embrace your high sensitivity.It's neither a flaw nor a disorder. It's a personality trait. You can better govern yourself if you are self-aware.

You'll be able to communicate effectively, recognise your triggers, and form deep connections. Being able to accept both your positive and negative traits is a wonderful thing since they define who you are. Learn to accept and love yourself unconditionally.

One thing I like to do with my clients is activity scheduling. If you know reading helps you a lot, set time for it in your schedule. After you've scheduled it, honour that time. By doing this, you will actively work on yourself and give yourself time to relax and unwind.

1Twenty80:

What advice would you give to HSPs navigating the world?

Grace:

Most of the time, we hold ourselves responsible for our inability to blend in with others. This self-deprecating self-criticism is not helpful at all and can cause breakdowns.

It's better to embrace the challenge and seize the chance to improve and learn instead. Because logically speaking, three months down the road, you'll be a more competent and courageous self than before.

You can improve upon yourself if you view it as a chance to learn and strengthen your resilience. But remember, balance is the key to life, so always treat yourself with kindness.

We hope our conversation with Grace Hu has given you a clear understanding of what it's like to be a highly sensitive person. By recognising each individual's unique strengths and sensitivities, we can foster a more compassionate and inclusive world. So, let's celebrate the richness that HSPs bring to our lives and continue on a path of mutual understanding and growth.

HSP Quiz

(copyright by psychologist Elaine N. Aron, 1996)

Are you a highly sensitive person? Take this quiz and find out! Do remember that this is only a self-assessment tool, so seek help from healthcare professionals if ever in doubt.

☐ I am easily overwhelmed by strong sensory input.

☐ I seem to be aware of the subtleties in my environment.

☐ Other people's moods affect me.

☐ I tend to be very sensitive to pain.

☐ I find myself needing to withdraw during busy days, into bed or into a darkened room or any place where I can have some privacy and relief from stimulation.

☐ I am particularly sensitive to the effects of caffeine.

☐ I am easily overwhelmed by things like bright lights, strong smells, coarse fabrics, or sirens close by.

☐ I have a rich, complex inner life.

☐ I am made uncomfortable by loud noises.

☐ I am deeply moved by the arts or music.

☐ My nervous system sometimes feels so frazzled that I just have to go off by myself.

☐ I am conscientious.

☐ I startle easily.

☐ I get rattled when I have a lot to do in a short amount of time.

☐ When people are uncomfortable in a physical environment I tend to know what needs to be done to make it more comfortable (like changing the lighting or the seating).

☐ I am annoyed when people try to get me to do too many things at once.

☐ I try hard to avoid making mistakes or forgetting things.

☐ I make a point to avoid violent movies and TV shows.

☐ I become unpleasantly aroused when a lot is going on around me.

☐ Being very hungry creates a strong reaction in me, disrupting my concentration or mood.

☐ Changes in my life shake me up.

☐ I notice and enjoy delicate or fine scents, tastes, sounds, and works of art.

☐ I find it unpleasant to have a lot going on at once.

☐ I make it a high priority to arrange my life to avoid upsetting or overwhelming situations.

☐ I am bothered by intense stimuli, like loud noises or chaotic scenes.

☐ When I must compete or be observed while performing a task, I become so nervous or shaky that I do much worse than I would otherwise.

☐ When I was a child, my parents or teachers seemed to see me as sensitive or shy.

If you answered more than fourteen of the questions as true of yourself, you are probably highly sensitive. If fewer questions are true of you but extremely true, that might also justify calling you highly sensitive. However, no psychological test is so accurate that an individual should base his or her life on it.

It is highly recommended that you seek professional advice from trained psychologists. ■

Source: Foundation for the Study of Highly Sensitive Persons

Expert Summary

Grace Hu is a clinical psychologist committed to helping individuals overcome challenges, develop resilience, and achieve personal growth. With a warm and empathetic approach, she seeks to create a safe and supportive environment to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Grace's primary approach to therapy is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and also incorporates other evidence-based techniques aligned with clients' needs. Throughout her work, she has worked with adults with a varying range of complaints and conditions, such as depression, anxiety, stress, relational issues, and many more. She also offers services for assessing and diagnosing mental disorders. Prior to that, she worked with children with special needs and volunteered in various community and outreach missions. Grace believes that mental health services should be made available to all who need them.

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EMPOWERING HAIR HEALTH

From a pharmacist's perspective

By Yasanthi Devi

In the never-ending pursuit of crowning glory, countless individuals have turned to hair loss supplements as a potential solution. However, amidst a sea of products and promises, it's essential to navigate this landscape armed with reliable information.

To shed light on the subject, we seized the opportunity to talk to a community pharmacist: Siti Afiqah binti Shikh Shatir, from Farmasi Jammy, Nibong Tebal, Pulau Pinang, whose expertise and insights bring clarity to the world of hair loss supplements.

Join us as we embark on a journey to gain valuable insights!

1Twenty80:

WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL REASONS BEHIND HAIR LOSS?

Siti Afiqah binti Shikh Shatir:

A person normally sheds between 50 to 100 hair strands per day. However, if a person sheds more than that daily, that person may experience excessive hair loss. Hair loss can be due to many reasons. The most common reasons for hair loss worldwide are hereditary. This genetically predetermined hereditary disorder occurs due to increased levels of androgens in hair follicles. The latter leads to a shorter cycle of hair growth, resulting in shorter and thinner hair. This condition affects up to 50% of males and females. Medically, we call it androgenic alopecia.

In women, the first noticeable sign of hair is usually thinning of hair. In men, the first sign is often a receding hairline or bald spot. The next reason is the natural aging process due to slow hair growth. Hair loss can also be seen when the body's immune system attacks hair follicles such as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). A person can lose hair anywhere on the body, this may include:

- The scalp.
- Inside the nose, and ears.
- Eyelash.
- Eyebrow.

On top of that, with Malaysia seeing a surge in cancer cases, cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation can contribute to hair loss within a few weeks of commencing treatment. Other possible reasons can be due to hormonal imbalance, stress, childbirth, hair colour, scalp infection, certain medications, and thyroid diseases.

1Twenty80:

HOW CAN SUPPLEMENTS ASSIST IN MANAGING THIS CONDITION?

Siti Afiqah:

Hair loss can be divided into two groups, namely scarring and non-scarring alopecia. Scarring alopecia usually leads to irreversible hair loss. Supplements can be beneficial in assisting hair growth in non-scarring alopecia via the role of micronutrients as supported by clinical studies.

Micronutrients such as the below play an important role as major elements in the normal hair cycle:

VITAMIN A

Vitamin A helps in cellular growth at 900 mcg retinol activity equivalents (RAE) for men (equivalent to 3,000 IU) and 700 mcg RAE for women (equivalent to 2,333 IU).

BIOTIN (B7)

Biotin can be naturally produced by the body. Vitamin B helps in keratin production

VITAMIN C

While vitamin C helps in hair loss that is associated with iron deficiency.

VITAMIN D

According to some studies, vitamin D has a potent immunomodulatory effect that helps in Alopecia Areata (AA) which is an example of non-scarring alopecia.

VITAMIN E

While vitamin E is a potent anti-oxidant for patients suffering from AA.

IRON

Iron helps in boosting circulation and brings oxygen to the scalp for better blood flow.

SELENIUM

ZINC

Zinc deficiency has been linked to cause hair loss but further study is needed to prove the correlation.

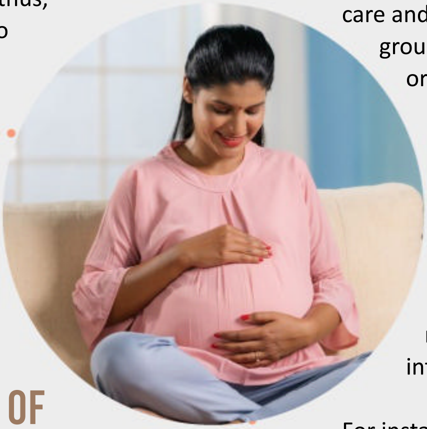
However, supplements are needed for certain genetic disorders.

1Twenty80:

WHICH PARTICULAR SUPPLEMENTS DO YOU PROPOSE FOR TREATING HAIR LOSS, AND WHAT ARE THEIR PRIMARY COMPONENTS?

Siti Afiqah:

I would suggest oral supplements with all of the vitamins mentioned previously such as multivitamins with biotin. Biotin dose ranging between 30 mcg to 5000 mcg is beneficial for hair loss. A supplement with L-cysteine which is crucial for the basic building of hair keratin can also help in hair loss. In addition, the silica found in horsetail extract in supplements is also responsible for healthy hair. Lastly, herbal-based containing Emblica officinalis, or known as Amla is one of the key ingredients that helps to reduce the greasiness and flakiness of the scalp thus, balancing the amount of sebum. Besides, it helps to generate new hair follicles.



1Twenty80:

HOW LONG IS THE USUAL DURATION FOR SEEING RESULTS FROM HAIR LOSS SUPPLEMENTS, AND WHAT CAN PATIENTS ANTICIPATE IN TERMS OF HAIR REGROWTH OR IMPROVEMENT?

Siti Afiqah:

Hair growth supplements do not produce results overnight. It usually takes at least 6 months or more to see promising results. The best thing is to know the underlying cause(s) of hair loss and to treat it accordingly. In some cases, we need medications instead of supplements such as topical minoxidil or oral finasteride. Yet, in the worst case, healthcare professionals will opt for hair transplant and surgery. Patients can anticipate new hair follicles growing at the hairline and less shedding of hair.

1Twenty80:

DO THE SUPPLEMENTS COMMONLY USED FOR HAIR LOSS HAVE ANY POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS OR INTERACTIONS?

Siti Afiqah:

Any supplements if taken at the recommended dose will not harm patients. This is also applicable to hair loss supplements. The recommended dose usually follows the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) and is based on clinical studies. However, special care and attention are needed for certain groups of patients who are experiencing or going through:

- Chronic kidney disease.
- Dialysis.
- Pregnant mothers.
- Breastfeeding mothers.
- Patients who are taking certain medications for which there may be supplement-medication interactions.

For instance, heart failure patients taking diuretics should not take horsetail extract due to the risk of dehydration or low potassium. Anyway, consult healthcare professionals before taking any supplements.

1Twenty80:

WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDED DOSAGE AND DURATION FOR TAKING HAIR LOSS SUPPLEMENTS? SHOULD PATIENTS CONTINUE TAKING THEM INDEFINITELY OR FOR A SPECIFIC PERIOD?

Siti Afiqah:

The recommended dosage usually follows the product label. In general, supplements containing multivitamins are to be taken once daily dosing after meals. Supplements require time to exert their effect, unlike medications which can give instant results. Thus, consistency is the key to taking any supplements.

A period of more than 6 months is usually suggested to get a good result for hair loss.

Nevertheless, the underlying causes of hair loss need to be addressed in order to optimize the treatment. If patients do not experience any improvement in terms of hair growth for at least 6 months of taking the supplements consistently, they should stop them and consult healthcare professionals. On the contrary, if there are improvements, the supplements should be continued. At this stage, patients can further increase hair growth with hair tonics or serums.

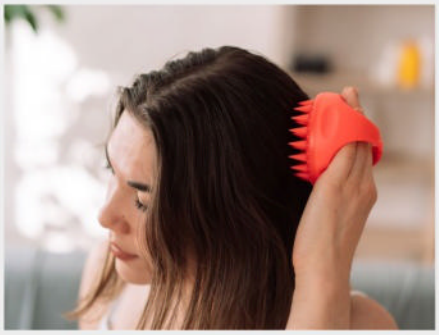
1Twenty80:

COULD YOU SUGGEST ANY LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS OR COMPLEMENTARY WAYS THAT CAN ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HAIR LOSS SUPPLEMENTS?

Siti Afiqah:

I would suggest a healthy lifestyle such as stopping smoking, reducing stress, eating a balanced diet, and exercising at least 3 times per week. On top of that, massaging the scalp, with hair oils might improve hair thickness. Massaging the scalp with the fingertips, not the fingernails encourage hair growth and thickness in the dermal papilla cells.

Scalp massages can be done daily for 4 minutes. Hair tonics and hair serums can also enhance the effectiveness of hair loss supplements. In addition, while stress is often a short-term cause of hair loss, severe stress or anxiety may be associated with hair-pulling disorder or trichotillomania. Researchers believe this health condition is related to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and other types of anxiety disorders.



1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS OR RESTRICTIONS THAT PATIENTS WHO ARE GOING THROUGH HAIR LOSS SHOULD BE AWARE OF?

Siti Afiqah:

To date, there is no known diet that can completely cure hair loss. Hair loss patients can increase their protein intake from lean meats, poultry fish, eggs, dairy products, legumes, nuts, and seeds. On top of protein, iron-rich foods such as lentils; beans; spinach, and fortified cereals are beneficial for iron-deficiency-associated hair loss. Taking healthy fats from omega-3 fatty acids from salmon, mackerel, sardines, walnuts, and flaxseeds is essential for scalp health. Excess of vitamin A consumption, on the other hand, has been shown to cause hair loss above the recommended dose.

1Twenty80:

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER TO CONSUMERS WHO ARE CONTEMPLATING THE USE OF SUPPLEMENTS FOR HAIR LOSS?

Siti Afiqah:

It is always a good idea to consult a healthcare professional before you start taking any supplements. They will assist you in monitoring your complete medical history before starting any supplements and can help to identify the potential causes of hair loss. If you are about to decide on your own supplement of choice, my advice would be firstly don't easily fall for any false claims of supplements. Make sure the supplements are registered with the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA). NPRA has an official website for the public to self-check their supplements and do product searching. Next, follow the recommended dosage, and avoid excessive intake which may worsen the condition. Remember, more is not always better when it comes to supplements. ■

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Gut Check:

Exploring the link between stress, the brain, and the stomach

There may be a deeper meaning to the butterflies you're feeling in your stomach

By Yasanthi Devi

In today's fast-paced and demanding world, stress has become an integral part of our daily lives, seemingly impossible to avoid. Although stress is commonly associated with its impact on mental and emotional well-being, recent research has revealed its profound implications for physical health, specifically in relation to the intricate connection between stress and stomach health.

The stomach, a vital component of the digestive system responsible for food processing and nutrient absorption, plays a crucial role in maintaining overall well-being. However, chronic or intense stress can disrupt this delicate balance, leading to a wide range of gastrointestinal problems. Recognising and comprehending the complex dynamic between stress and stomach health is essential for safeguarding our overall wellness.

This article dives deep into the fascinating correlation between stress and stomach health, understanding how stress influences the gastrointestinal system. By exploring the mechanisms and potential repercussions of stress on the stomach, our objective is to provide insights into the significance of stress management and its role in fostering a healthy gut.

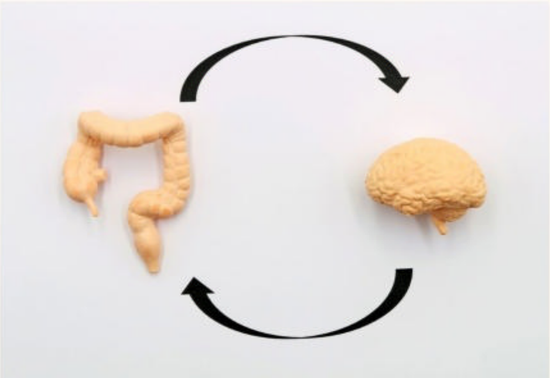
Embark on this enlightening exploration as we uncover the captivating relationship between stress and stomach health with some food suggestions that can benefit your gut health.

Setting the digestive stage

The abdominal cavity of the human body houses the gut, which is alternatively referred to as the gastrointestinal tract or digestive system. Extending all the way from the mouth to the anus, it encompasses a series of organs that include the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine (colon), rectum, and anus.

The gut-brain connection

The gut-brain axis (GBA) is a communication system that connects the brain's emotional and cognitive centers with the functions of the intestines. It involves two-way communication between the central nervous system and the enteric nervous system. Exciting new research in the Journal of Clinical Investigation (2015) has emphasized the role of gut microbiota in influencing these interactions. The interaction between the microbiota and GBA works in both directions, with signals traveling from the gut microbiota to the brain and vice versa through various pathways involving nerves, hormones, immune factors, and body fluids.



> WHILE THE ENS COMMUNICATES WITH THE BRAIN, EXPERTS BELIEVE IT ALSO HAS THE ABILITY TO FUNCTION INDEPENDENTLY, MAKING DECISIONS AND INFLUENCING DIGESTION.

Enter the Enteric Nervous System (ENS)

The enteric nervous system (ENS) is a specific part of our body's nervous system that exists in our digestive system, including the esophagus, stomach, intestines, and colon. It’s often called the "second brain" because it can operate somewhat separately from the brain in our head.

The ENS manages crucial functions in our gastrointestinal tract, such as regulating the movement of food through the intestines, coordinating the release of digestive enzymes, and controlling the contraction of muscles involved in digestion. All of these processes tend to happen automatically, without conscious effort.

Made up of millions of interconnected nerve cells called neurons, the ENS communicates through electrical signals and chemical messengers called neurotransmitters. These neurons interact with each other and the rest of our body.

While the ENS communicates with the brain, experts believe it also has the ability to function independently, making decisions and influencing digestion. It can detect changes in the digestive environment and respond accordingly to ensure everything runs smoothly. In essence, the enteric nervous system is a specialised component of our nervous system that regulates important functions in our digestive tract.

18+

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Butterflies in the stomach?

The gastrointestinal tract holds secrets to our emotional states, unveiling a remarkable sensitivity to a range of feelings including anger, anxiety, sadness, and euphoria. These emotions have the power to awaken gut symptoms, revealing the profound influence of our emotional landscape on our digestive system.

If you've reached this point of reading, you're probably able to deduce that the brain wields direct control over the intricate workings of the stomach and intestines. For example, the mere thought of eating can trigger the release of gastric juices even before food arrives. This fascinating connection operates bidirectionally, as an unsettled intestine can send distress signals to the brain, just as a troubled mind can relay its turmoil to the gut. This explains the theory behind distress experienced by one's stomach or intestines may serve as both the root cause and the consequence of anxiety, stress, or depression. This symbiotic relationship between the brain and the gastrointestinal (GI) system highlights their close connection.

Keep your friends close, and your gut closer

Below are some foods that can potentially benefit your gut health:

Fermented foods

Some of these fermented food options boast an abundance of lactobacilli, a beneficial strain of bacteria that can contribute to your overall well-being.

Kimchi

Kombucha

Tempeh

Yogurt (Plain and unsweetened is the best!)

Prebiotics

Prebiotics are a type of dietary fiber that serves as a source of food for beneficial bacteria in the gut. They are essentially food for probiotics, which are the beneficial bacteria residing in our gastrointestinal tract. Even though humans are unable to prebiotic fiber, good gut bacteria can digest them for you. Prebiotic-containing food:

Onions

Garlic

Asparagus

Bananas

Berries

Polyphenol-rich foods

Eating polyphenol-rich foods may improve your gut health. Below are some polyphenol-rich foods:

Green tea

Broccoli

Onion

Almonds

Cocoa

The interplay between stress, the brain, and the stomach highlights the undeniable connection between mental and physical health. Understanding and addressing this link helps us better understand the importance of holistic approaches for overall well-being. ■

Source: WebMD, Healthline, Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, Harvard Health
Reference: Mayer, E. A., Tillisch, K., & Gupta, A. (2015). Gut/brain axis and the microbiota. Journal of Clinical Investigation, 125(3), 926–938.

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- ✓ *Acid Reflux*
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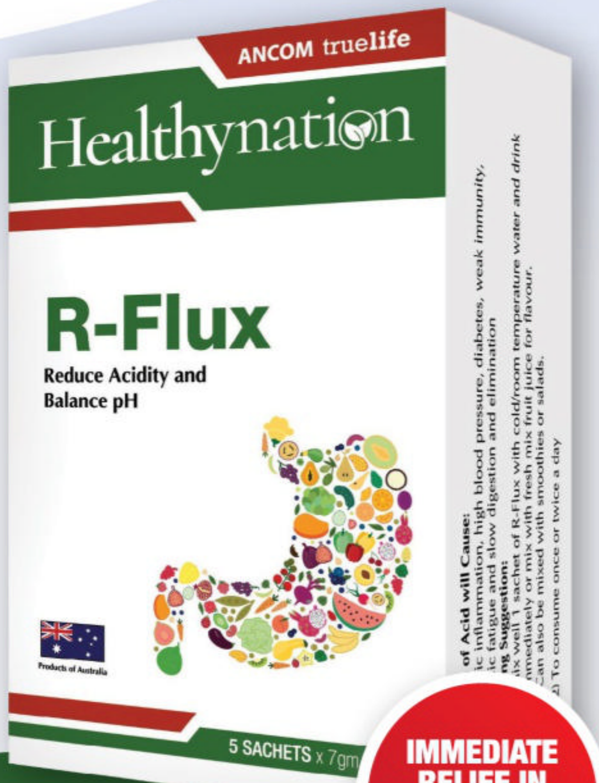
- ✓ *Digestive Issues*
- ✓ *Severe Gastric Problem*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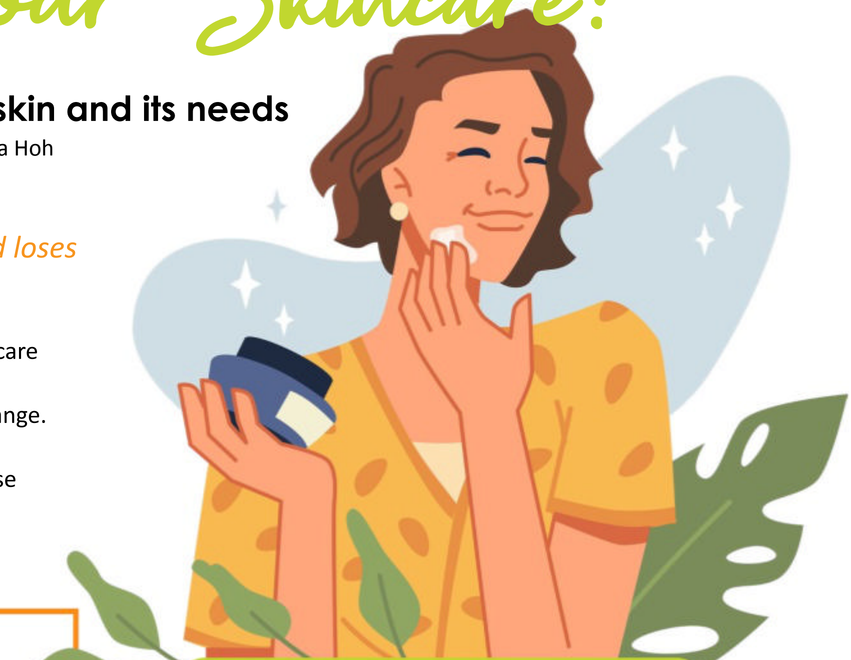
How Often Should You *Change Your Skincare?*

Understand your skin and its needs

by Ada Hoh

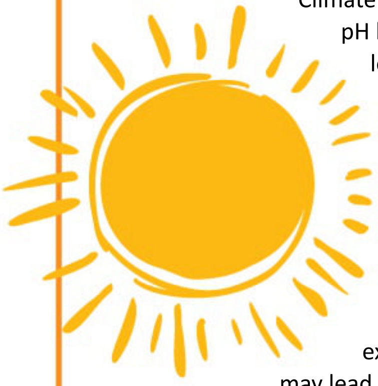


Your skin gets used to skincare products and loses their effectiveness over time.

This popular belief is true, to a certain extent. Our skincare remains efficacious given that external factors remain consistent. Oftentimes, however, these factors may change.

Let's explore more details about the ways in which these factors affect our skincare.

FACTORS AFFECTING YOUR SKIN'S NEEDS



Climate Changes

Climate changes may alter the pH balance of our skin, leading to acne or dryness. High temperatures and humidity may also trigger eczema or psoriasis.

Lifestyle Changes

Lifestyle changes that involve increased sun exposure and stress levels may lead to weaker skin that is more prone to bruising or tearing.

Hormonal fluctuations

During monthly periods, skin sensitivity may increase, as well as skin dryness and dullness. During pregnancy, melasma (dark spots) may appear. During menopause, skin thinness, dryness, facial sagging, and wrinkles may occur.

Medications

Certain drugs or treatments may cause skin dryness, blue spots of discoloration, and skin sensitivity, among others.

4 SIGNS YOUR SKINCARE IS NOT WORKING

When your skincare isn't suitable for your skin, it's time for a change. Here are some signs to help you determine:

- Redness, burning or stinging sensation on your skin
- Excessive dryness, flaking, or peeling of skin
- Formation of rashes or blisters
- Sudden pigmentation changes, such as brown spots, freckles, or sunburn

4 SIGNS YOUR SKINCARE IS SUITABLE

On the other hand, to determine if your skincare is suitable for you, here are some signs to tell:

- Your skin looks hydrated and bright
- Your skin is free of pain and irritation
- Your skin is smooth, supple and uniform in colour

We should change our skincare when our skin requires different needs, or when our skincare isn't working for us. If all is good, let it stay good.

Sources:The Cut, Healthline, Loma Linda University Health, Axia Women's Health, Harvard Health, The New York Times, The Healthy, Insider

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UNDERSTANDING FESTIVE BURNOUT

Even in the jolliest of times, our bodies shouldn't be neglected

By Ada Hoh

The most wonderful time of the year is upon us!

This means Christmas shopping, planning, gathering, and partying. Right after our Christmas celebrations, the New Year's celebrations come knocking on our door, and a month after that, Chinese New Year.

Despite the laughter and fun these festivities bring, their back-to-back celebration can become stressful for some. Due to social obligations, societal expectations, and financial issues, we may experience feelings of pressure, anxiety, dread, and resentment towards the festive season.

This is known as festive burnout, and we're here to provide ways in which you can mitigate them this holiday season.

CAUSES OF FESTIVE BURNOUT

The festive season exposes us to numerous stressors over a short period of time. These stresses include queuing for presents, sitting in traffic, worrying about money, and even stressing about seeing family.

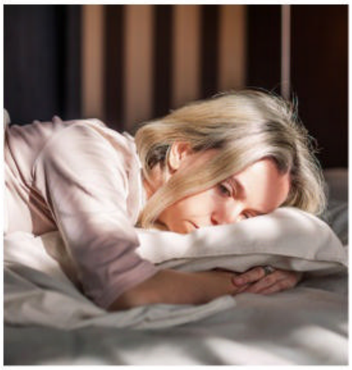
When your brain identifies a stressor, it activates your sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the body's 'fight or flight' mode, in order to prepare your body for stressful situations.

The sympathetic nervous system's response is natural and healthy, on an occasional basis. Repeated stressors and constant activation of the system may lead to an imbalance of cortisol levels in the body, causing trouble sleeping, fatigue, and feeling drained.

SIGNS OF FESTIVE BURNOUT

Here are signs that may occur when experiencing festive burnout:

- Mood swings.
- Exhaustion.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- A negative outlook on life.
- Procrastination, and struggling to motivate yourself.
- Feeling overwhelmed, even by simple tasks.
- Feeling more irritable.



TIPS TO AVOID FESTIVE BURNOUT

Here are some tips to avoid experiencing burnout this festive season:

Avoid Overcommitting Yourself

It's easy to overcommit to social events, gatherings, and responsibilities during this holiday season. However, overcommitment can lead to a schedule that is mentally and physically draining. Instead, leave spaces in-between your calendar to rest.

Pace yourself

Rushing to get last-minute presents from the store and facing problems parking, queueing, and crowding can be a great source of stress for some. By pacing yourself on your Christmas shopping, it can help avoid the last-minute overcrowding and make the process enjoyable.

delegating

Delegate

It is important to delegate in order to avoid being overwhelmed and pressured from all your tasks. For example, have a family member help get groceries for dinner parties, or ask a friend to help get a present which happens to be at a store close to where they are staying.

Keep Your Expectations Realistic

It is important to set realistic expectations on yourself in order to prevent added stress and burnout. For example, instead of being burdened with all the cooking in your party, why not share the load by having your guests each bring in a dish? That way, everyone shares the responsibility and fun.

TIPS TO OVERCOME FESTIVE BURNOUT

If you find yourself already experiencing burnout, here are some ways to help overcome them:

Pick Your Priorities

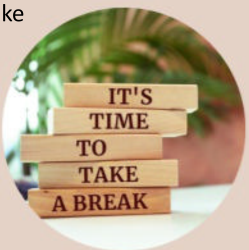
PRIORITIES...

Take 15 minutes to look through your to-do list, then allocate priority to items which are most urgent, meaningful and enjoyable for yourself. This may help filter out tasks that are excessive or unimportant, and significantly reduce your mental stress

Ask for Help

After sieving through your to-do list, you may find that some tasks do not need to be completed by yourself. Then, ask a friend or a family member for help. Also, if you find yourself facing difficulty to complete a task, ask for help on resources, ideas, or even mental and emotional support. A little help goes a long way.

Take Breaks



Finally, be sure to take breaks in-between your tasks. You may want to complete all your tasks first before you give yourself a break, but that can lead to more stress and burnout. Restore your body with short breaks and don't compromise on sleep. Make sure to relax and share quality time with yourself, your friends, and your family this festive season. May you end the year well and start the year with renewed energy! ■

Sources: AsiaOne, The Conversation, Headspace, Psychology Today

Is Animal Fat Good or Bad?

Understanding good and bad sources of animal fat

By Ada Hoh

Commonly present in the Malaysian diet, animal fat is both loved and hated bysome. They can add flavour to your dish or give your bite a nice balance of texture with a mixture of fat and meat.

Let's dissect and understand more about the sources, benefits and drawbacks of animal fat.

What is Animal Fat?

Animal fat is any fat obtained from an animal source. More specifically, animal fat is made up of three molecules, known as ‘triglyceride’, which are present in the bodies of any animal such as chicken, cow, fish, or sheep.

There are two types of fat: saturated and unsaturated.

Saturated fats are mostly found in animal fats, and commonly take the form of solids. Eating too much saturated fats can raise cholesterol levels, which may increase the risk of heart attack.

Unsaturated fats, commonly liquids at room temperature, are considered ‘good’ fats because they improve blood cholesterol levels, ease inflammation, and stabilise heart rhythms. They are commonly sourced from plants and found in vegetable oil, nuts, and seeds.

Animal Fat vs Vegetable Fat

It is commonly known that animal fat is bad for you, and vegetable fat is the better option, but why?

A study conducted by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that participants who had animal fat posed a higher risk of heart disease compared to those who had vegetable fat. This is because of the saturated fat present in animal fats, which drive up cholesterol levels, leading to blockages in the arteries of the heart.

On the other hand, vegetable fat is sourced from plants. Therefore, they are typically rich in vitamins, polyphenols, and polyunsaturated fats, all of which are known to be heart-healthy due to their long-chained chemical structure.

All Fats Are Bad: Are They?

'All fats are bad' is a common belief that stems all the way back from the 1970s when there was a suggested restriction on fat intake. Typically, fat does have more calories compared to other macronutrients (such as proteins and carbohydrates), but there wasn't much discussion on the types of fat and how they were bad.

The recommended daily fat intake is less than 30 percent of one's total calories. By filling this amount with 'good' fats, particularly monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, one may be able to lower bad cholesterol (LDL) levels, lower blood pressure, reduce build-up of plaque in the arteries, control blood sugar levels, and reduce the risk of diabetes. After all, fat functions as a source of energy, and helps the body to absorb vitamins and nutrients.

Benefits of Animal Fat

When taken in excessive amounts, animal fat can be unhealthy to our bodies. However, having them within the recommended amount (5 to 6 percent of total fat intake) can be beneficial for our body.

This is because animal fat are also sources of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat. They contain Omega-3 and Omega-6, which helps build and maintain the blood-brain barrier, and develops the cortex (the part of the brain responsible for higher-order thinking). This type of fat, known as DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), can be found in animal fat.

Good vs Bad Sources of Animal Fat

Here is a list of good and bad sources of animal fat:

Good Sources:

Salmon

Anchovies

Mackerel

Tuna

Trout

Oysters

Shrimp

Lamb leg

Turkey breast

Chicken meat

Egg

Milk

Cheese

Yogurt

Bad Sources:

Fatty cuts of beef, pork and lamb

Margarine

Butter

Whole milk

Ice-cream

Dark chicken meat

It is crucial to understand that there are good and bad sources of animal fat. Most importantly, having controlled levels of fat intake according to the recommended amount may enable the body to stay healthy and maintain optimal functioning. ■

Sources: NHS, Healthline, Harvard T.H. Chan, Harvard Health, Time, Psychology Today, Better Health

BENEFITS OF Pomegranates

From heart to gut

By Ada Hoh

Believed to be the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, Pomegranates may have existed since the beginning of time—dating back to Ancient Greece and modern-day Persia. With its rich history, pomegranates have a global market value of over USD 240 million (RM1 billion) today.

This is largely due to the great health benefits pomegranates provide. Let's explore some of these benefits, and ways in which pomegranates can improve
our health.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF POMEGRANATES

HIGH IN ANTIOXIDANTS

Antioxidants are molecules found in fruits and vegetables that fight against free-radicals (the cause of various chronic illnesses) in the body. As such, eating pomegranates may prevent blood clots, reduce cancer risk, reduce inflammation, and contain anti-ageing properties.

SUPPORT URINARY HEALTH

Due to the compounds of Potassium and Hydroxycitric Acid (HCA), pomegranates may dissolve kidney stones and prevent stones from forming. It may also help the kidney excrete toxins and waste.

CONTAIN ANTIMICROBIAL PROPERTIES

Antimicrobials refer to a group of agents that kill bacteria and prevent them from spreading to other parts of the body, thus reducing the risk of infection and sepsis. As pomegranates contain strong antimicrobial activity, they may protect us against bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites.

MAY IMPROVE PHYSICAL ENDURANCE

Due to the polyphenols present in pomegranates, research has found that they contribute towards improving physical endurance and muscle recovery, and improving physical performance.

SUPPORT DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Studies have found that pomegranates contain prebiotics, which fuels good gut bacteria to promote a healthy digestive system. Issues such as constipation, gastric, and indigestion may be addressed with the support of good gut bacteria.

RECOMMENDED DAILY INTAKE

The recommended amount of fruit intake is 1.5 to 2 cups a day (300 to 400 grams). One pomegranate fruit contains approximately 300 grams of seeds, so having one pomegranate a day allows you to reap the benefits of this superfood.

PRECAUTIONS FOR HEALTH CONDITIONS

Although pomegranates may be good for you, precautions should be taken for special situations. Some people experience diarrhoea and allergic reactions. Pomegranates may also slow the breakdown of certain medicines, so it is important to check with a doctor if you are on any medications.

Sources: Edible Paradise, Pharm Easy, Real Food Pledge, Healthline, Molecules 2021 Journal, USDA My Plate

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A Solo Traveler's Guide to Wanderlust

Discover the world on your own terms

By Yasanthi Devi

Setting out on a solitary escapade can be a life-altering journey that presents freedom, self-exploration, and the prospect of forming remarkable connections. If you're contemplating embarking on a solo expedition, you're in for an extraordinary experience. We've thoughtfully selected some of the most inviting and secure locations for solo explorers, along with an array of exceptional activities and lodging options. Get ready to pack your bags and embark on an unforgettable solo adventure.

#1

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

WHAT ATTRACTS SOLO TRAVELERS: Iceland's awe-inspiring natural landscapes offer a haven for intrepid solo adventurers. The sparsely populated terrain gives you a sense of having the entire country to yourself.

TOP EXPERIENCES: Indulge in a rejuvenating soak at the Blue Lagoon, embark on waterfall-hiking escapades, and embark on the mesmerising quest to witness the Northern Lights.

LODGING OPTIONS: Opt for a sociable and convivial hostel, creating opportunities to connect with fellow travelers.

#2

BARCELONA, SPAIN

WHAT MAKES IT IDEAL FOR SOLO TRAVELERS: Barcelona's vivacious cultural scene, welcoming locals, and lively streets create a paradise for individuals traveling alone.

MUST-DO EXPERIENCES: Wander through the enchanting Park Güell, leisurely stroll along the bustling tree-lined street of La Rambla, and relish the diverse tapas offerings at local bars.

ACCOMMODATION CHOICES: Select a boutique hotel conveniently situated in the city center for easy access to Barcelona's myriad attractions.

#3

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

WHY SOLO TRAVELERS ARE DRAWN IN: Scotland's historic capital is a treasure trove of culture, history, and charm, providing a secure and hospitable environment for solo wanderers.

NOTABLE EXPERIENCES: Explore the venerable Edinburgh Castle, wander along the heart of Scotland's historic capital called the Royal Mile, and conquer the ascent to Arthur's Seat for breathtaking vistas.

ACCOMMODATION CHOICES: Select a cozy guesthouse that exudes Scottish warmth and hospitality, ensuring a comfortable stay.

#4

QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

WHAT SOLO TRAVELERS FIND CAPTIVATING: Queenstown serves as an adrenaline enthusiast's playground and a social hub for solo explorers seeking adventure.

KEY ACTIVITIES: Take the plunge with bungee jumping, experience the thrill of skydiving, or embark on a scenic cruise along the majestic Milford Sound.

WHERE TO STAY: Opt for a backpacker's hostel or a serene lakeside cabin, offering a harmonious blend of excitement and relaxation.

Credit: PomInOz / Shutterstock.com

#5

QUEBEC CITY, CANADA

WHAT APPEALS TO SOLO TRAVELERS: The enchanting cobblestone pathways of Old Quebec dating back to the 17th century exude a secure and romantically charged ambiance that solo travelers find captivating.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES: Embark on an exploration of Old Quebec, pay a visit to the majestic Montmorency Falls, and indulge in the quintessential Quebecois dish – poutine.

WHERE TO LODGE: Opt for a boutique hotel nestled in the heart of Old Quebec to immerse yourself in an authentic and charming experience.

Credit: travellight / Shutterstock.com

#6

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

WHAT MAKES IT A SOLO TRAVELER'S PARADISE: Wellington's intimate scale, affable residents, and breathtaking natural scenery create an alluring destination for those journeying solo.

NOTABLE PURSUITS: Delve into the wonders of Te Papa Museum, conquer Mount Victoria on a memorable hike, and immerse yourself in the city's vibrant arts scene.

LODGING PREFERENCES: Opt for boutique hotels that extend a warm Kiwi welcome, ensuring a hospitable and cozy stay.

#7

DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

WHAT DRAWS SOLO TRAVELERS IN: Dubrovnik's captivating old town, safety measures, and its coastal charm collectively shape an enticing atmosphere for those traveling alone.

RECOMMENDED EXPERIENCES: Meander along the historic city walls, explore the botanical garden of Lokrum Island, and unwind on the sun-kissed shores of Banje Beach.

WHERE TO STAY: Select boutique hotels to savour a dose of Croatian hospitality and add an extra layer of charm to your stay.

#8

SALZBURG, AUSTRIA

WHY SOLO TRAVELERS ARE ENCHANTED Salzburg's friendly locals, picturesque streets, and the city's low crime rate converge to create an ideal destination for solo adventurers.

TOP ACTIVITIES: Dive into the legacy of Mozart at his birthplace, immerse yourself in the history of Hohensalzburg Fortress, and let the hills come alive on a Sound of Music tour.

LODGING CHOICES: Opt for snug boutique hotels that offer a cozy and warm Austrian welcome, enhancing your experience in this delightful city.

Key Solo Travel Guidelines

#1

THOROUGHLY RESEARCH YOUR DESTINATION

Before departing, conduct extensive research on your chosen location. Familiarize yourself with local customs, culture, laws, and any specific safety considerations. Utilise travel blogs, consult guidebooks, and refer to government travel advisories.

#3 STAY CONNECTED

Ensure you possess a functional mobile phone with either a local SIM card or an international plan. Maintain regular communication with friends and family, and establish a means to reach local authorities or your home country's embassy or consulate if necessary.

#5 FAMILIARISE WITH EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Memorize the local emergency contact numbers for the police, medical services, and fire department. Keep this essential information easily accessible at all times.

#7 ACCOMMODATION SELECTION

Opt for accommodations situated in safe neighborhoods, especially if you anticipate arriving late at night. Scrutinise reviews and favour establishments with positive feedback from fellow solo travelers.

#8 MAINTAIN AWARENESS

Continuously stay alert to your surroundings. Trust your instincts, and promptly remove yourself from any situation that raises suspicion or discomfort.

Source: Visit Reykjavík, Salzburg Burgen & Schlösser Betriebsführung, Barcelona City Council, Visit Dubrovnik, Official Quebec City Website, Visit Wellington, Forever Edinburgh, Queenstown NZ, Travel & Leisure,Time Out, EuroNews, Via Travellers, Trip Advisor

#2

SHARE YOUR ITINERARY

Prior to your journey, share your travel itinerary with a trusted friend or family member. Provide them with comprehensive details about your accommodations, transportation, and emergency contacts.

#4

SAFEGUARD YOUR BELONGINGS

Prioritize the security of your possessions, especially crucial documents like your passport, financial resources, and travel insurance. Use a discreet money belt or concealed pouch for valuable items.

#6

EXERCISE CAUTION WITH LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

When utilising public transportation, especially during nighttime hours, exercise vigilance. Rely on reputable transportation services, and refrain from using unlicensed taxis or rideshare options.

#9 FAVOUR DAYTIME TRAVEL

Whenever possible, plan your arrivals at new destinations during daylight hours. This practice simplifies the process of locating your accommodations and getting acclimated to your new surroundings. ■

Festive CHARCUTERIE PLATTER

Make the perfect festive food assemble for your next party

By Edeline Anne Goh

Tired of serving the same old menu every festive season? Or perhaps looking forward to serving a dish with a shorter preparation time?

A charcuterie platter is just what you'll need to festive season!

Consisting of preserved meats, cheese, fruits, spreads, crackers and even vegetables, a charcuterie platter caters to the palate of the young and old, without the need for you to stand in the kitchen for hours to prepare a dish. All you'll need is a wooden board or a large serving plate, a variety of dry ingredients, perhaps a spread and you're ready to create a charcuterie platter. The best part about this is, assembling it all depends on your creativity and truly that's the fun part of it.

Here's how you can get started, depending on the size of your serving dish, pick about one to two ingredients from each category and put plate them together!

#1

FOR THAT SWEET TOUCH

- Blueberries
- Mini mandarin oranges
- Melon
- Grapes
- Raisins
- Chocolate

#2

FOR A DOSE OF CALCIUM

- Gouda
- Brie
- Camembert
- Cheddar
- Blue cheese
- Gruyere

#3

FOR SOME CRUNCH

- Water crackers
- Cheese crackers
- Multigrain crackers
- Flatbread crackers
- Pretzels
- Wafer
- Finger biscuits

#4

FOR A GOOD SPREAD

- Hummus
- Pate
- Fruit jam
- Cream cheese spread

#5

FOR SOMETHING SALTY

- Salami
- Ham
- Olives
- Pickled vegetables

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